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Kids exposed to scenes of death, abortion

'Terrifying' scenes in church show horrify locals

By MIKE MATHER in Rotorua

HORRIFIC scenes in a Rotorua church play have alarmed locals, who say graphic depictions of suicide, abortion and mutilation are being seen by children.

Amber, who did not wish to have her last name published, said she went to see *Welcome to Hell* at the Victory Church in Malfroy Rd on Thursday night with a friend "out of curiosity".

Amber said she was shocked that children in the audience were being exposed to such terrifying scenes with no prior warning of the graphic content.

However, Victory Church makes no apologies for the play which it says is meant to be shocking, to convey what Hell may be like.

Amber said she thought "the show would be some kind of cool haunted house for the kids. We thought that there would be some kind of scary scenes, but nothing as graphic and realistic as what it was".

One scene in the play showed a baby on a screen pleading not to be aborted, then a graphic birth simulation which ended with an actor dressed as a doctor throwing a piece of meat in a bin.

Another scene was set in Hell and had a woman adorned with piercings chained to a wall pleading to be released. Other scenes include a suicide, a car crash and domestic violence, in which a man cuts off his wife's arm with a chainsaw.

People entering a church were

told to hold on to a chain, which pulled them from scene to scene, Amber said.

"It was mostly pitch black. The whole thing lasted for 12 minutes but it was a pretty horrible 12 minutes and once you were in you couldn't get out."

them about the hope in the gospel of Jesus."

The audience members were informed about other church services and Pastor Abrahams said he hoped they "would make a decision to become a Christian and live for Jesus Christ".

Although the Victory Church put on many productions throughout the year, this was the first such play that had been performed there, he said.

Flyers advertising the play were originally printed with a warning that children under 13 should be accompanied by an adult.

Pastor Abrahams said a decision was made on Thursday night to bar children aged under 13.

Warnings at the entrance to the church also advised people with medical conditions and pregnant women not to enter.

"I don't know how anyone could not have seen the warning signs. There were people on the door advising those coming in to look at them."

The show was staged on Thursday night and last night and was to finish tonight. There is a \$2 charge.

Many churches and church groups stage alternative productions and shows to coincide with Halloween, October 31.

The Taupo Elim Community Church is holding a Superheroes Party tomorrow night, billed as a "positive alternative to Halloween". The church has asked that children not wear scary costumes.



VICTORY Church on Malfroy Rd, where the production *Welcome to Hell* is being staged.

PICTURE: BEN FRASER

The final scene showed people being redeemed by accepting God.

"They said that even one little sin, like telling a lie, would see you going to Hell... It had nothing at all to do with Halloween. It was just a disgusting way of recruiting for the church," Amber said.

Victory Church pastor David Abrahams said people going to the play would have been warned of the graphic nature of the production.

"There are scenes that are shocking and that is the whole idea of it," he said.

"We tried to graphically portray what Hell might be like and what is going on around us every day. At the end of the production we tell

A haunting at the museum?



ARE there really ghosts lurking in nooks and crannies at the Rotorua Museum of Art and History? Museum staff member Wallace Te Ahuru gets ready to be frightened.

PICTURE: ANDREW WARNER

By DONNA KERR in Rotorua

DAVE Kiel knows what he saw. He wrote it in his diary.

"Saw wispy image of two people on viewing platform. A man and a woman. Young. Standing by corner. They said nothing. Just looked at me and disappeared."

Mr Kiel, 51, is a construction foreman and was overseeing a renovation in the afternoon at the Rotorua Museum of Art and History when the ghosts appeared.

He was alone on the roof exposing the original timber work and had paused to pick up his level.

"I turned around and there

I blinked just to make sure I was seeing what I was seeing. Then they faded away in front of me."

DAVE KIEL

were these two people standing right beside the hole I had just opened. They just sort of looked at me as if to say 'what are you doing?'. I blinked just to make sure I was seeing what I was seeing. Then they faded away in front of me."

Mr Kiel said it lasted about four seconds.

The couple were dressed in Edwardian costumes with high lace collars.

"They were aged in their mid-20s. He was baby faced. She was very pretty, that's for sure."

Mr Kiel, who was a radio broadcaster for 10 years, said he was used to dealing with facts, not fiction.

"I know people are going to say this guy isn't the full quid but I'm not someone who hallucinates. I wasn't looking for it. I didn't anticipate it."

"Call me anything you like

mate but I know what I saw."

The museum's manager of collections and programmes, Cherie Meecham, said she was not surprised and did not doubt Mr Kiel's account.

"In the past we've had visitors who have said they have seen friendly ghosts or spirits down in that wing."

She said the latest sighting would no doubt attract interest from both believers in ghosts and skeptics.

■ *Have you been visited by a ghost? If the answer is yes, we would love to hear from you. Email us at news@dailypost.co.nz or telephone (07) 348 6199 ext 870.*

■ **Rotorua's haunted suburb, B1**

Te Arawa to stage own kapa haka festival

By MEGAN LACEY in Rotorua

THE inaugural Te Arawa Kapa Invitational Festival is less than a month away and organisers are preparing for an explosion of kapa haka talent.

The controversial festival is being held after Te Arawa boycotted the national festival, Te Matatini, this year amid concerns about the future direction of the competition.

Event organiser and deputy mayor Trevor Maxwell said Te Arawa kapa haka committee wanted to provide something for the iwi's groups who did not take part at this year's national festival.

"Groups are very active in Rotorua. Not taking part in the national competition has brought us closer together. We performed together at Lakeside, Jambalaya and, of course, the major British Lions tour."

Mr Maxwell, who was a delegate on the Te Matatini board, said he had repeatedly taken Te Arawa's concerns to the board without any change. The concerns included the future direction of the event moving away from kapa haka, concerns over ownership issues regarding material used in the festival, selection of judges and the draw.



TE Arawa kapa haka groups performed together for the Lions tour group.

PICTURE: SUPPLIED

A decision was made for Te Arawa to boycott this year's national festival and hold its own festival, on Saturday, November 26.

Mr Maxwell said there were many good reasons for holding the invitational festival, including Rotorua's own historical

celebrations. The competition's theme is The Birth of Rotorua — 125 Years Celebration.

"Culture is always alive in Te Arawa. By nature, many of our performers are very competitive and we have held successful events in Rotorua many times in the past."

Mr Maxwell said the committee, under the chairmanship of Anaru Grant, decided to stage the event and invite Te Arawa's "friends" from neighbouring regions.

Six Te Arawa teams will take to the stage, including Te Mataarae I Orehu, Ngati

Rangiwewehi, Tuhourangi/ Ngati Wahiao, Mai I Maketu ki Tongaririo, Ngati Whakaue and Ngati Pikiao. Invited top teams include Waihirere, Opotiki Mai Tawhiti, Taniwharau and Whangara Mai Tawhiti.

The leader of Whangara, Derek Lardelli, composed the

new All Blacks haka.

The draw will be held on the eve of the competition.

The invitational competition's format has slight variations to the Te Matatini festival. The groups have 21 members each, instead of 40, and the performances are for 20 minutes, instead of 25.

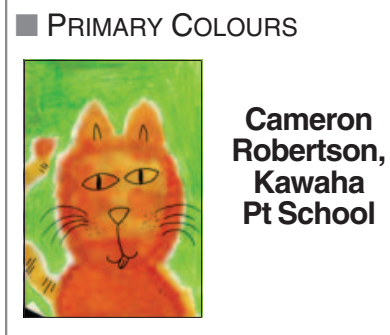
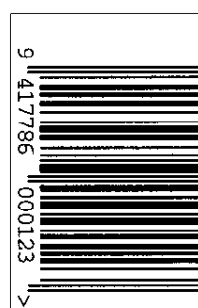
"In the evening there will be an awards ceremony and a dressed up banquet where you can enjoy each other's comfort in a wonderful setting. Often at a major festival, performers don't get the opportunity to mix and mingle."

Leader of Te Mataarae I Orehu, Taini Morrison, said the festival was about unity.

"All our hapu is after the same vision to develop and really provide a solid basis to nurture those coming through and acknowledge those who have come before. It's about time we strengthened ourselves. To put the strength back into our own."

The festival's powhiri will be held at Tamatekapua on Friday, November 25.

The competition will be hosted by MC's Scotty and Temuera Morrison at the Rotorua Arena at Rotorua Girls' High School the following day.



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